

Holy Fathers
of
The Syrian Orient
Entombed in Kerala

Cor-Episcopo K. Mani Rajan, M.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.



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Cor-Episcope K. Mani Rajan

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Preface

This book is a collection of thirteen biographies of the *Holy Fathers of Syrian Orient Entombed in Kerala*. I have compiled these biographies earlier which are spread over in different volumes of *Martyrs, Saints & Prelates of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Vol. I-V). Therefore, my purpose here is to incorporate the details in a single book which will help teachers of catechism.

Many prelates including Patriarchs of Antioch lived here for few years and returned to their homelands whereas thirteen of them spent their lives in Kerala and were entombed here. This collection of biographies was prompted by two concerns: first, the heritage of the Syrian Church should be introduced to the present generation, and second, the tireless efforts of the Fathers of the Syrian Orient should be gratefully acknowledged. Some authors are skeptical about the Apostolic succession of these holy fathers and have made despicable comments about their work in Kerala. However, the book *Seemakkaraya Pithakkanmar* by Aphrem Paulose Ramban (1964) shed much

light on the efforts of holy fathers of the Syrian Orient to maintain Apostolic faith and tradition in the Syrian Orthodox Church in Kerala.

The heresies, divisions and conflicts between empires to extend their territories have created much problems and crises in the Syrian Orthodox Church. However, the Church of God has withstood perils of various kinds. The service rendered by the thirteen holy fathers in upholding the true faith which otherwise would have been lost by seventeenth century is to be remembered gratefully.

I am much obliged to JSC Publications, Puthencruz, for taking up the publication of the book. I sincerely thank Mr. Julius C. Abraham, M/s Megapixel Graphics, Kottayam, for the layout and cover design of the book.

I sincerely wish and hope that the faithful of Syrian Orthodox Church will find this book useful and appreciate the efforts of holy fathers of the Syrian Orient who are entombed in various churches in Kerala.

25 May 2017

Cor-Episcopo (Dr.). Mani Rajan

Feast of Ascension of our Lord

1. Mor Ahathulla, Martyr

(A.D. ? – 1653)

The holy fathers who came to Malankara had to overcome and survive many hardships and challenges and many had to even sacrifice their lives in order to maintain and sustain the true faith. Among them prime importance goes to Mor Ahathulla. Mor Ahathulla was sent from Antioch to Malankara due to persistent letters from Thoma, the Arch-Deacon, who had led the Syrian Church in those times. He reported the persecution suffered by his folks.

Mor Ahathulla arrived in Malankara in A.D. 1653. Malankara Church was then under the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church after the Diamper Synod in A.D. 1599. The Portuguese bishops with the support of the Portuguese military force had appointed sentries in all possible places where the bishops from the Middle East churches could land.

Mor Ahathulla who was sent to his spiritual children in Malankara arrived in Surat in A.D. 1653. Having received information from the

Portuguese the Goa administrator captured him and incarcerated him at Mylapore.

Deacon Chengayil Itty from Chengannoor and Deacon Kizhakkedath Kurian from Kuravilangadu who were on a pilgrimage to St. Thomas church in Mylapore met Mor Ahathulla quite accidentally. They exchanged information and Mor Ahathulla sent a encyclical (*kalpana*) through them. It stated that he would arrive in Malankara and would consecrate Thoma, the Arch-Deacon as metropolitan and in case he was withheld by the Portuguese, except ecclesiastical powers like ordination of priests and consecration of bishops, all administrative matters should be carried out by Thoma, the Arch-Deacon.

The ship carrying the prelate from Mylapore to the persecution centre in Goa docked at Cochin. Hordes of Syrian Christians getting a wind of it informed the Arch-Deacon and he along with priests and twenty five thousand faithful arrived at the Cochin Fort to free their holy father. There were only three hundred soldiers guarding the fort at that time. Alarmed on seeing the huge crowd they pulled back the moat bridge and positioned the cannon towards them. Helpless in rescuing the prelate they approached the king of Cochin and presented their supplication.

The King summoned the person in charge of the fort and issued an order to release the spiritual father of the Syrians who was kept in captivity. Somehow or other the Portuguese wielded their influence. That night itself they drowned Mor Ahathulla by tying a millstone round his neck. The woeful Syrians when they knew about the dastardly act decided to sever all relations with the Roman Catholic Church. The oath taken on behalf of this at Mattanchery is the historically famous Pledge of the slanting cross (*Koonan Kurishu Sathyam*). The feast of Mor Ahathulla is celebrated on 16 January.

2. St. Gregorius Abdul Jaleel

(A. D.? - A. D. 1671)

Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was sent to India in A. D. 1665 at the request of Thoma Arkadiyakon of Malankara (Kerala, India). A formal letter of request was sent to the Patriarch Ignatius Shemvun I (A. D. 1640-1659) through Deacon Stephen Aspar of Amid. The request was granted by Patriarch Abdul Masih I (A. D. 1662-1686).

Abdul Jaleel was born at Mosul, Iraq. He was ordained Priest upon completing his theological studies. In 1654, Patriarch Ignatius Shem'vun (Simon) I ordained him Bishop by name Themotheos. Until 1664, Mor Themotheos Abdul Jaleel served the diocese of Amid. Subsequently, Mor Themotheos was appointed Bishop of Jerusalem and the ecclesiastical name Gregorius was given as was the tradition. The father of Mor Gregorius was a rich man. Mor Gregorius had brought a share of his property with which he bought the Thorakkal property at Paravur (Kerala, India). This property later became the asset of St. Thomas Syrian church, North Paravur which was founded in A. D. 1566.

The Canon of Bar Ebroyo (1994) stipulates that there should be four Patriarchs - - Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople and Antioch. The Metropolitan of Jerusalem shall be called the fifth Patriarch. Thus, Jerusalem although comes under the see of Antioch, shall be known as a Patriarchate, a special status accorded for various reasons.

The Diamper Synod, the Oath of Slanting Cross, and the circumstances in Malankara (Kerala, India) in A. D. 1653 were known to the Holy See of Antioch. It is at this juncture that the Patriarch deputed Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel to Malankara. Mor Gregorius landed at the coastal village of Ponnani, in North Kerala in A. D. 1664. He spent a few days at Ponnani in disguise for fear of the enemies of the Church. A few days later he met some Christian businessmen and revealed that he was a Syrian Bishop and started his journey to Kottayam (Curien, 2003).

On 1 July 1665, Mor Gregorius ordained Thoma Arkdiyakon episcopa by name Marthoma I. Mor Gregorius and Marthoma I ordained Marthoma II.

Mor Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was working in the vineyard of the Church since his arrival in A. D. 1665. He visited churches, preached the true faith of the Syriac Orthodox Church, insisted on the use

of leaven bread for the Holy Eucharist, allowed the marriage of Deacons before Priesthood and removed statues erected in the church. Mor Gregorius is known as the Ya'coub Bardaeus of Malankara for he saved the Church from the Roman impositions. Forty-five of the sixty-nine churches received Mor Gregorius with all respect and honour due to a prelate (Curien, 1982).

Mor Gregorius spent his last days at St. Thomas church, North Paravur. Forseeing his death, he took a bath and dressed and with the vestments entered the church and slipped into eternal life on 27 April 1671. The church bell rang on its own and an unusual light spread all around.

The handcross used by Saint Gregorius had relics of saints in eleven cavities and one contained a portion of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. This handcross is set out for public veneration on the feast day. His Holiness Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas declared Mor Greogorius a Saint vide Apostolic Bull No. 71/2000 dated 4 April 2000. Later, the name of St. Gregorius Abdul Jaleel was included in the fifth diptych of the Holy *Qurbono* vide Apostolic Bull No. E50/2006 dated 7 February 2006. The feast of Saint Gregorius is celebrated on 27 April.

3. St. Mor Baselios Yeldho Maphrian

(A.D. 1593? – 1685)

Yeldho was born in the famous Hadhai family in Karakosh village near Mosul, Iraq. Karakosh village was earlier known by the names Bakudaida or Kooded. At a very young age he joined Mor Bahnam Monastery near Kooded.

In A.D.1662, Patriarch Esau II (Quamsheh) consecrated Ramban Yeldho a Maphrian. Mor Mathai monastery in Mosul town was his head quarters. The Governor of Mosul incarcerated Mor Yeldho along with Very Rev. Rambans Ge-evarghese and Isaac over matters regarding the renovation work done in Mor Mathai monastery and they were made to pay a huge amount as fine.

In A.D. 1677 Geevarghese Ramban was consecrated Metropolitan under the name Mor Dioscorus by Mor Yeldho for the Jaseera diocese. Soon he was installed as the successor of Mor Yeldho Maphrian by Patriarch Abdul Masiha I. In A.D. 1684 the Patriarch consecrated the holy chrism in Saffron (Kurkuma) monastery and

spoke about the necessity of metropolitans going to Malankara. Mor Yeldho Baselios who attended this holy function volunteered for the service despite his old age (91 years).

Mor Yeldho proceeded to his head quarters to make preparations for the journey (Aphrem, 1964; Varghese, 1998; Kurian Corepiscopo, 2003). He was accompanied by his brother Jamma, two monks from Mor Behnam monastery, Jocko and Mathai and Mor Ivanios Hidayathulla Episcopo. Of these five only three, Mor Yeldho Maphrian, the Episcopo and Ramban Mathai arrived at Malankara. He was one of the illustrious Syrian fathers who came down to guide the Malankara Church in turbulent times.

The saintly Maphrian and his associates who started from Basra in 1685 arrived at Tellicherry. Fearing persecution from the Portuguese they went to Pallivasal incognito. There must have been other travellers in their journey towards Pallivasal. There are several stories of miracles that happened during the saint's hazardous trip to Kothamangalam. They encountered a tiger on the way ready to pounce. When the Maphrian raised his cross and prayed the tiger ran away. When they reached Pallivasal his fellow travellers chose to stay near the present power house which was the usual place of halting. The Maphrian suggested it was better to shift their camp to a farther area.

They did accordingly. During midnight there was a heavy downpour and in the ensuing flood many people along with those who put up camp in the first mentioned place were washed away. The next day he offered *Qurbono* in Pallivasal. Many people opine that the place gained the name Pallivasal because the Holy Father had stayed there.

They reached Kozhipalli after traversing a forest. Maphrian enquired a Chakkala Nair tending cattle if there was a church nearby. The man expressed his inability to lead them as he could not abandon his cattle. The Maphrian drew a circle and the they were made to stand inside the circle. Nair was amazed to see the cattle remaining inside the boundary line. He then informed the prelate his sister was in throes of labour pain. He wanted some water blessed by him to ease her pain. For that he got ready to climb a coconut tree. But the tree inclined before him and the Maphrian blessed the tender coconut water. He went to give it to his sister who had an easy delivery after drinking the blessed water. (Even now the eldest member of Chakkalakkudy Thekkalakkattu Nair family leads the perunnal procession holding the lamp).

The Holy Maphrian was led to Kothamangalam Cheryapally that day (The church was established on 13 *Kanni* A.D. 1455). On reaching there he sat

down on the north-western side of the church. The date of arrival was 7 *Kanni* 1685. On his arrival it is believed the church door opened by itself and the bell began to toll. It was the culmination of ultimate sacrifice, endurance and obedience. It was as indefinable as the glorious entry through heavenly portals.

Mor Hidayathulla Episcopo was consecrated Metropolitan by Mor Yeldho Baselios on 14 *Kanni* (Yacoub, 1958). He fell ill due to his extreme old age and tedious journey. He received the last sacraments of anointment with holy oil and extreme unction on 19 *Kanni*, thirteen days after his arrival at Kothamangalam. The saintly father left for his heavenly abode on Saturday, 3 p.m. on 19 *Kanni*. At the time of his death the huge granite cross in the church compound was miraculously lit up. He was entombed in the sanctuary of Mor Thoman Cheriyaipally, Kothamangalam on 20 *Kanni* 1685. According to Bull No. E 265/87 of the year 1987 he was declared a saint by H.H. Patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. The Church celebrates his feast on 3 October with spiritual grandeur.

4. Mor Anthrayose, Kallada

(A.D. ? – 1692)

Mor Anthrayose arrived in Kerala in A.D. 1678 along with three brothers. He is considered to be a saint mainly on the basis of his devout and pious life. One of the brothers who accompanied him was a Ramban. Mulanthuruthy church received them enabling them to spend many years there. Later on, due to some adverse circumstances he and the brothers had to leave Mulanthuruthy. They arrived in Kallada after travelling through Piravam, Manarcad and Puthenkavu. Mor Anthrayose passed away on 2 March 1692 and his mortal remains were entombed in Kallada church. After his demise the brothers set out on a journey to the northern parts of Kerala. The Ramban who went along with them passed away at Chennithala and was entombed there. The faithful believers consider his tomb a holy place.

The remaining two brothers returned to Mulanthuruthy after visiting Kuravilangadu and staying at Srambikkal adjacent to the church building. One of them named Joseph married from

Palasana family and settled down on the northern side of the western market. Two sons were born to them. One married into the Kattumangadu family (where wild mangoes grow in plenty) and the other settled down with Thanangattil (Thanangukadu) family. Most families in Mulanthuruthy can trace their roots back to these two families.

It is considered a heavenly benediction that these zealously religious who were laid to rest in Malabar Independent church, Thozhiyoor (Anjoor) and Mor Gregorius Chathuruthil otherwise known as *Kochuthirumeni* all hailed from this ancient family. The ancient and reputed Kattumangadu family has many priests and cultural leaders who can trace their lineage back to this ancient family tree.

There is a legend connected with the travels of Mor Anthrayose. A family in a central Travancore village who did not hold him in high respects served him jackfruit on his visit. They provided him cotton to wipe his hands clean. The bishop unaware of the consequences used the cotton and struggled when his hands became messy and sticky. The members of the family made fun of him and he was embarrassed and sad as he left them. Later on many in their family contracted the fatal venereal disease and it was passed down to many generations. While staying at Manarcad church

he ordained a priest from Vettikunnel family and they still remember his blessing with gratitude. The feast of Mor Anthrayose is celebrated on 2 March.

5. Mor Ivanios Hidayathulla, Delegate

(A.D.? – 1694)

Mor Ivanios hails from Bakkudaida, the native village of Maphrian Mor Baselios Yeldho entombed in Cheriypally, Kothamangalam. His father's name was Shammo. He offered himself for missionary work at Mor Bahnam Sahada monastery in A.D. 1661 and became an inmate. During this time, he accompanied Mor Baselios Yeldho Maphrian to Malankara to offer protection to Syrian Christians. He was deputed to help the venerable father in administrative matters. Mor Gregorios Abdul Jaleel (A.D. 1665) arrived in Malankara after the oath of slanting cross at Mattancherry, Cochin (*'Koonan Kurissu Satyam'*) and defended the Holy Faith.

After the demise of the Mor Gregorios Abdul Jaleel in 1683, the then Arch-deacon, Thoma II sent a petition to Patriarch Abded Mishih I through a merchant, Joseph. The petitioner praised the ardour of Mor Gregorius who tried to free the Syrians from Latin servitude and described the

slew of persecutions employed by the Latins to compel the Syrians to join their fold after the death of his predecessor. The petition made an appeal to send a metropolitan and four efficient teachers (*malphone*) to Malankara for the protection of the believers. A deputation started out from the patriarchal presence for this purpose.

H.H. the Patriarch was upset about the problems faced by the believers in Malankara. He conducted the consecration of holy chrism and discussed the grave situation in Malankara with all episcopos. Maphrian of the east, Mor Baselios Yeldho on realizing the lamentable situation in Malankara expressed his willingness to relinquish his administrative powers and to go to Malankara to take care of the shepherdless folk. Mor Ivanios was consecrated an episcopo and was sent along with Maphrian Mor Yeldho for his assistance. He traversed a route via Basra in 1685 along with his brother Juma of Mor Mathai monastery, Ramban Jocko of Mor Behanam monastery, Ramban Mathai and Episcopo Mor Ivanios Hidayathulla. Fearing the Portuguese rulers, they travelled incognito and after a laborious sojourn across difficult terrains like forests and mountains, they arrived at Kothamangalam. They started as a company of five. But historical records show that only Maphrian Mor Yeldho, Mor Ivanios and Mathai Ramban arrived here safely.

The Maphrian who arrived thus in Malankara raised Mor Ivanios to the order of a metropolitan on 14 in the month of *Elool* (September) on the day of the feast of the Holy Cross. The saintly Maphrian breathed his last at Cheriya Pally thirteen days after his arrival on 19th *Elool* and was laid to rest at Cheriya Pally on 20th *Elool* A.D. 1685. Mor Ivanios had to take up the entire apostolic work of protecting the true faith in Malankara. He constructed new churches and renovated many old ones with the money he had brought with him. He also trained the priests to be scholars in the use of Syriac language and in the laws of the Church and to impart spiritual advice.

He wrote books and spoke vehemently and directly against the prohibited customs and new ideas introduced by Alexis Menzes, a Latin. He convened a synod at Chengannor church in A.D. 1686 to protest against the reformatory ideas decided upon in the Diamper Synod in A.D. 1599. Many priests and laymen from the southern churches participated in the Synod. After detailed discussions, there was reading of books of prelates and teachers and citing of the canons of the universal and local synods. Mor Ivanios issued an edict, which affirmed that the faith, customs and rituals of the Syrian Orthodox Church from the time of the disciples had been true and blameless. The Romans in the past eighty

years had forcefully introduced alien principles. He exhorted the believers to observe lent as per the norms of the Syrian Orthodox Church and to celebrate the Holy *Qurbano* using the leavened bread.

A youth from Pakalomattom family was given priestly education and was ordained a deacon, a priest and then an episcopo under the name Mor Thoma III in A.D. 1687. When he passed away on 9 *Medam* A.D. 1688 Mor Ivanios ordained Mor Thoma IV to take up the spiritual authority.

Mor Ivanios continued his hard work for the progress of the Church. The foes of the true faith could not appreciate his work and they looked for an opportunity to put an end to his life. The Bishop on knowing about this evil plot spent many a night atop trees (Aphrem Paulose, 1964). Though, he lived only for nine years in Malankara his service and contributions to the Church are glorious. The Holy Father departed for the heavenly abode on 16 August A.D. 1694 at Marthoman church, Mulanthuruthy and he was entombed on the south side of the sanctuary. His tomb has been henceforth known as the bishop at the south tomb (*Thekke Kabarunkal Bava*). The tomb was opened on 24 December 2006 and the relics were interred on the southern wall of the sanctuary. His feast is celebrated on 16 August.

6. Mor Baselios Shakr Allah III

(A.D.? – 1764)

Shakr Allah was born as the son of Deacon Moosa Al Quasbjji. After completing his seminary education he became a monk and later he was ordained a priest (Aphrem I, 2000).

Shakr Allah was consecrated Maphrian in the month of August 1748 by the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, Mor Ignatius George III (1745 – 1768), and was sent to Malankara. He was sent there on the request of Mor Thoma V. Mor Shakr Allah Maphrian was accompanied by Metropolitan Mor Yuhanon Gregorios, Very Rev. Corepiscopo Geevarghese, Ramban Yuhanon and Deacons Anthon, Moosa, Hadaya Shakr Allah and a servant Abdulla.

Two and a half centuries ago conveniences were limited and travel was dangerous. They started their journey on 25 *Chingam* from Amid (Amida or Dayarbakar, Turkey) which was the then patriarchal headquarters.

Maphrian carried with him sixty-four manuscripts, holy books, three crosses from

Jerusalem and relics of saints for the Malankara Church. From Amid they went to Aleppo (Old Alab or Halab, Syria) then to Baruva and from there to Bagdad, Iraq. On their way to Bagdad they were attacked and the money meant for the travel was plundered. From Bagdad to Basrah (Al Basrah, Iraq) they went by boat. After spending some days in Basrah they continued their journey by an English ship to Bander-e Abbas, Iran. They were compelled to stay there for seven months for fear of pirates and because of the ongoing battle between Persian kings. Mor Shagr Allah's *Travelogue to Malankara* written in 1751 was published in the patriarchal magazine, *Al Majella Al Petriarchia* (Vol. 7, pp. 125-133) by Patriarch Aphrem I (Aphrem I, 2000).

The Maphrian and his company reached Surat on 24 *Kumbham* 1751. In this journey as well from Bander-e Abbas to Surat they were attacked by thieves. They arrived at Cochin on 23 *Medam* 1751 (on the day of the feast of St. George). He was the Governor's guest at the Cochin fort. He had to pay about Rs.12000/- as travel fare to the shipping company. Contrary to the prior agreement Mor Thoma V refused to meet the expenses or visit the Maphrian. He was in a difficult situation.

Twenty days later Metropolitan Mor Ivanios Yuhanon visited the prelate at the Cochin Fort. Mor

Ivanios had been consecrated Metropolitan of the Patriarchal Palace by Patriarch Shagr Allah in 1740 and he was sent to Malankara in 1746 by Patriarch Geevarghese III. He returned to Amid, his native place in 1751 after the arrival of Maphrian Shagr Allah. Even though four letters were sent to Mor Thoma V he did not respond. He stayed seventy two days at the Fort and after visiting the Rajah of Cochin on 3 *Karkkidakam*, he reached St. Martha Mariam Church, Kandanad on 4 *Karkidakam* 1751. Even there the meeting with Mor Thoma V did not take place. He reached Kothamangalam travelling on foot via Mulamthuruthy, Kolenchery and Kunnukurudy.

Mor Shagr Allah stayed at Kothamangalam Valiyapally and Mor Thoma V at Cheriya pally for some days. In spite of that the expected meeting did not take place. The Maphrian offered prayers at the tomb of Baselios Maphrian and waited for the arrival of Mor Thoma V in vain. He had spread some erroneous references too about the Maphrian. In this context on 30 *Medam* 1752 Ramban Yuhanon who had accompanied the Maphrian was consecrated the Malankara Metropolitan instead of Mor Thoma V at the Kandanad church (Philip, 1992).

Mattancherry church was built by this Holy Father by purchasing the land for Rs.475 (INR). He had spent a long period at Kayamkulam Kadeesa

church. He has written a book in Arabic '*Quelat Al Imrah*' regarding the Christian belief.

His Beatitude who had lived and served the Malankara church for thirteen years attained his eternal rest while staying at Mattanchery church on 9 *Thulam* 1764. His Beatitude was entombed at St. Martha Mariam church, Kandanad. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 22 October.

7. Mor Gregorius Yuhanon

(A.D. 1695 – 1773)

Yuhanon, son of priest Isahak and Semma was born in 1695 in Bakudaïda also known as Kooded or Karakosh near Mosul (Aphrem, 1964). He is a family member of Mor Yeldho Maphrian who is entombed at Cheriapally, Kothamangalam. Yuhanon and his brother sleeba had been monks at Mor Behnam monastery near Bakudaïda.

Yuhanon was consecrated Bishop with title Gregorius for Mor Behnam monastery and parish in 1747 by the hundred and ninth Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Geevarghese III (A.D. 1745 – 1768). Mor Gregorius Yuhanon accompanied Mor Basalius Shakur Allah Maphrian, who is entombed in Martha Mariam church, Kandanad, to Malankara in 1749. From 1764 onwards he was involved in the administration of Malankara Church (Aphrem, 1964). Yuhanon Ramban of Mosul who came to Malankara with Mor Gregorius Yuhanon was consecrated Bishop under the name Mor Ivanios Yuhanon in 1752 by Mor Shakar Allah Maphrian (this venerable father passed away in 1794 and was entombed at Chengannoor church). These

two Syrian prelates carried on the administration of Malankara during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Thoma V passed away in 1765 without receiving proper laying of hands. Before his death he had consecrated his nephew Joseph as Thoma VI without any canonical decision. Mor Gregorius Yuhanon and Mor Ivanios Yuhanon wrote a letter to Thoma VI in which they stated “Dear brother, we are foreigners in this land. We have left our own brothers and friends and henceforth we see you all in their places.” Subsequently when Mor Gregorius Yuhanon was celebrating *Qurbono* at Niranam church Thoma VI came up to him and fell at his feet to beg pardon. Mor Gregorius raised him affectionately and kissed him.

Thoma VI was consecrated bishop under the name Mor Divannasios on 27 May 1770 by Mor Gregorius Yuhanon and Mor Ivanios Yuhanon and he was given the hand cross, crosier and *sthatikon* sent by Patriarch Geevarghese III through Mor Shakar Allah Maphrian when Thoma V was to be ordained) (Philip, 1992). It was written in the *Susthatikon*, ‘Mor Gregorius, the Bishop of Jerusalem and Episcopo of India Mor Ivanios have consecrated Joseph who is called Thoma as the Bishop of Malankara Church under the name Mor Divannasios. This was done on the orders of Patriarch of Antioch, Mor Ignatius’.

After his consecration Thoma Mor Divannasios presented a written agreement to Mor Gregorius and Mor Ivanios in which he stated “The poorest and weakest among all metropolitans, Mor Divannasios Joseph has written this agreement on my own free will and is presented to Bishop of Jerusalem Mor Ggregorius and Episcopo Mor Ivanius. I promise hereby to offer *Qurbono* according to the Syrian rites. I will give them each a silver coin daily for their day to day needs.” (It was written on *Thiruvonam* day, *Chingam* 1770 at Niranam church). He started ordaining priests and deacons. People were also happy at the newly established peace. These three bishops co-operated in rendering the congregational work of the Church with great zeal.

From 1772 onwards Mor Gregorius's eyesight started weakening. Very Rev. Ramban Abraham Kattumangad treated him for some time. The venerable prelate passed away on 10 July 1773 and he was entombed on the north part of the sanctuary of the Marthoman church, Mulamthuruthy. Later on 24 December 2006 his relics were transferred to the northern wall of the sanctuary. The feast of Mor Gregorius Yuhanon is celebrated on 10 July in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

8. Mor Ivanios Yuhanon

(? – 1794)

Mor Ivanios Yuhanon was born in Mosul, Iraq. The Patriarch, Ignatius Shukar Allah (A.D. 1722 - 1745) ordained him Ramban at Saffran monastery and he was ordained priest in A.D. 1724. Patriarch Ignatius George III (A.D. 1745-1768) sent him to Malankara along with Maphrian Shukar Allah in A.D. 1749. Mor Baselios Shukar Allah Maphrian consecrated him an episcopo at Kandanad church on 30 *Medam* 1752. He was to discharge his apostolic and administrative duties from Pallikkara church but as it was an important center of Mor Thoman VI, the natives caused him a lot of trouble. The Maphrian had trained and inspired him to suffer and tolerate all tribulations and hence he could endure all the difficulties and continue his life there. When he fell ill, the Maphrian sent him to Cochin and after his recuperation, he was appointed at Kandanad. After the demise of the Maphrian, he assisted Mor Gregorios Yuhanon in administrative matters.

His brother Abraham arrived from Mosul in A.D. 1769 to take him back to their native place. He refused to accompany him as he wished to restore peace in the congregation. He wanted to advise Mor Thoma VI and bring him back to the Church and to ordain him and he could achieve that after concerted efforts. After the demise of Mor Gregorius, ecclesiastical duties were rendered with the co-operation of Mor Divanasios I. Together they could resolve problems related to a fake ramban, Abraham Kattumangad, who had appropriated the Episcopal powers. They filed a petition against him before the Rajas of Cochin and Travancore. The royal court transferred the case to the Dutch company. Their twelve judges examined the case and passed the verdict against Abraham Ramban. Mor Gregorius had not ordained him. He had merely seized the crosier and the Episcopal vestments of Mor Gregorius. As soon as the verdict was passed, he rushed to the Latin Bishop at Varapuzha who was a friend but he was followed and caught at Ponjikkara (Rajan, 2007a).

Four soldiers presented him before the Divan who ordered him to be taken to Mor Deevannasios and Mor Ivanios. Hence, he was brought to Kandanad where they were residing. On a Sunday at the church in the presence of all believers and priests, they questioned him. The

bishops were seated at one side of the table placed before the altar. The interrogation was carried out before lighted candles, with the Book of Gospels and a Cross placed on the table. Abraham Ramban confessed to committing sins. They asked him to remove and place his Episcopal vestments, cross, crosier and mitre on the table and to repeat the following prayer and to request for mercy. He consented and repeated the prayer, 'I have sinned against Heaven and God and not worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired servants in your house'. He stayed at Kandanad for three months and when his health was impaired, he requested permission to leave for treatment. On receiving permission, he proceeded to Anjhoor (Thozhiyoor) in Malabar under the jurisdiction of the Dutch and again proclaimed himself an episcopo (Aphrem Paulose, 1964). The illegal Episcopal order of the Anjoor congregation started thus. (However, there is a different view about these events).

Mor Ivanios continued his Episcopal and related activities along with Mor Deeavannasios I until his death on 7 *Medam* (*Neeson*) 1794 and he was entombed in the Old Syrian church at Chengannoor. The feast of Mor Ivanios Yuhanon is celebrated on 18 April in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

9. St. Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim

(A.D. 1818 – 1874)

Mor Coorilos Yuyakkim was born in A.D. 1818 in the village Habab in Thur'abdin, Turkey. His father's name was Malki Bar Israel. He had five brothers Elia, Israel, Mordokkai, Skaria, Gabriel and two sisters Satha and Hedna.

He rendered his spiritual duties with great enthusiasm even at a young age. He learned Syriac language and Theology under the tutorship of Mor Severios. In 1845 Ramban Yuyakkim was consecrated a Metropolitan under the name Mor Coorilos by Patriarch St. Elias II (1838 – 1847).

During this period, English missionaries tried to prevail on Bishop Mor Deevannasios of Chappad to make alterations in the rituals and practices of Malankara Syrian Church. They wanted to remove the prayers for the faithful departed, and intercession to St. Mary and other saints from the Holy *Qurbono Thakso*. Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta, gave leadership to this movement (Curian, 1982). Malpan

Abraham Palakunnel of Maramon co-operated with the foreign missionaries and became their spokesperson.

A meeting of the two sides was convened with the help of Chappad Mor Deevannasios on 5 Makaram 1836 at Mavelikkara and a contract was accepted. This is known as '*the Mavelikkara Padiyola*'. The Padiyola declared that the Syrian Christians of Kerala were directly under the ecclesiastical administration of the Patriarch of Antioch. The holy spiritual leaders of the Church formulated the prayers and the rituals of the Church and no modifications can be made in them without the sanction of the Patriarch (Aphrem Paulose, 1964).

Mor Deevannasios informed Patriarch Ignatius II when the English missionaries violated the contract. Rev. Philipose Kassis Edavazhikkal also supported him on this issue.

Deacon Mathews, son of Mathachan Palakkunnath, a native of Maramon, was sent to the Patriarch who was stationed at Mardin, Turkey under the guise of carrying a request from the people. He was endowed priestly position and was consecrated Bishop with the title Mor Athanasius on 2 February 1842. (He was the initiator of the Marthoma Church).

Mathews Athanasios who was not consecrated legally started working with the reformers. On hearing about the complaints against him, the Patriarch sent Mor Coorilos to Malankara. He arrived along with his brother Israel in Cochin on 26 *Chingam* 1846. A team of believers under the leadership of Mor Deevannasios received them. Mor Coorilos listened to the charges against Mathews Athanasios and as he was convinced about the veracity of the issue, published the excommunication Bull the Patriarch had entrusted to Mor Coorilos.

After his ban, Mor Athanasios sought refuge with the Protestants. With their assistance and influence, he cajoled the Raja of Travancore to issue a declaration on 9 June that he was the legally consecrated Metropolitan. The British Resident upon his influence published an ordinance prohibiting the entry of foreign metropolitans to Travancore and Cochin. Mor Coorilos was compelled to leave Kottayam and to go to Cochin on 8 January 1849 (Aphrem Paulose, 1964). He stayed at Fort Cochin and constructed a church there.

When Patriarch St. Ignatius Yacoub II (1847 – 1871) came to know about the turn of events, he sent Mor Athanasius Stephanos to Malankara. He arrived at Cochin in February 1849. Even after

his arrival, the state of affairs remained the same. Mor Athanasius then went to London via Calcutta on 1 September 1852 and filed a petition in the Court of Directors of the East India Company. The prohibition order was cancelled in 1857 and as the travel ban on foreign metropolitans was lifted, Mor Coorilos could travel freely in Malankara. He discharged his services by thwarting the efforts of the Reformists, constructing new churches and thereby protecting the True Faith.

The prayer book printed at Kottayam Seminary Press by Mor Athanasius Mathews had not included the prayer 'Hail Mary. . '. Mor Coorilos sent Joseph Kathanar, Pulikkottil to Calicut to print 2000 copies of the original prayer book for distribution. Mor Coorilos who was a scholar in medical science and Mathematics could cure many sick people. He was an expert in Syriac and Arabic languages and he mastered Malayalam during his twenty-eight years' stay in Malankara.

Mor Coorilos spent many years in Mulanthuthy church which is known as the Jerusalem of Malankara. He ordained Deacon Geevarghese Chathuruthil, a priest (1865) and later a corepiscopo. He also ordained Paulose Kochuparambil of the same parish, a deacon (Mor Coorilos Paulose Panampady, d.1917). Bishop Mor Geevarghese Chathuruthil (d.1902) and

Mor Coorilos Kochuparambil got inspiration for spiritual growth from the venerable Mor Coorilos.

After his laudable service in Malanakara for twenty-eight years, he entered to eternal rest on 2 September 1874 and he was entombed on the northern side of Mor Thoman church, Mulanthuruthy. According to Bull No. E 214/08 dated 10 October 2008 he was proclaimed a saint. The Syrian Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 2 September.

10. Mor Athanasius Shem'un the Delegate

(? – A. D. 1889)

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the invasion of Protestant missionaries into the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church. They had the support of the British. The Kottayam Cheriapally was in the custody of the Protestants following a Court order.

Patriarch Moran Peter IV returned to Jerusalem in 1877 after conducting the Mulanthuruthy Synod in 1876. In 1880, Mor Dionysius Joseph Pulikkottil (who was ordained by Patriarch Moran Yacoub II in 1865) and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil (who was ordained by Patriarch Moran Peter IV in 1876) wrote a letter to the Patriarch Moran Peter IV describing the difficulties in the Malankara Church due to the Protestant schisms. Understanding the situation, Moran Peter IV ordained Ramban Shemvun by name Athanasius and sent him to Malankara along with Deacon Sleeba (later the delegate Saint Mor Osthatheos Sleeba). Ramban

Shemvun had visited India in 1849 along with Mor Athanasius Sthepanose of Thurabdin. They reached Kochi on 1 January 1881.

In 1879, Mor Dionysius Joseph filed a petition against Thomas Athanasius, the successor of Palakkunnath Mathews Athanasius for the recovery of properties in their custody. The Royal Court Judgement was in favour of Mor Dionysius Joseph in 1889. During this period (1881-1889) Mor Athanasius Shemvun was residing and conducting services at the Barsawmo's church (Puthenpally) Kottayam. [The Foundation stone for Puthenpally was laid as per the direction of Mor Coorilos Yuyakim, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, on 15 February 1868 (Philip, 1993)]. The Kottayam Valiyapally was also under the custody of the Protestants except the vestry to the South of the church (Philip, 1993; Stephen, 2006).

Subsequent to the Royal Court Judgement, Mor Dionysius Joseph regained the Old Seminary and Mor Athanasius Shemvun shifted his residence to the Old Seminary, Kottayam. Mor Athanasius Shemvun departed for the heavenly abode on 11 June 1889 at the Old Seminary. The mortal remains were interred at the Northern side of the altar of Mor Barsawmo's church (Puthenpally) Kottayam. The anniversary of Mor Athanasius Shem'un is celebrated on 11 June.

11. St. Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the Delegate

(A. D. 1854 – 1930)

Sleeba was born at the village, Kafarso, (near Shrehre) near the city of Amid, Mesopotomia on 1 January 1854. He was born in the Abakkar family to Salbi and Naboona. He had two brothers and three sisters. His father Salbi died when Sleeba was a child. His father's brother, Priest Dhenha, was his first teacher. Later he learned Syriac and theology from very Rev. Samuel Ramban who was the vicar of the Damascus church.

In 1849 Very Rev. Samuel Ramban came to Malankara (Kerala, India) with His Grace Mor Athanasius Stephanos at the direction of His Holiness Yacoub II, the Patriarch of Antioch. Ramban Samuel returned home after eight years. At that time, the protestant missionaries were causing trouble in the Church.

His Holiness Patriarch Peter IV came to India in 1875. The Synod of Mulanthuruthy, the appointment of Mor Dionysius Joseph as Malankara Metropolitan, the administrative set up

of the Church into seven dioceses, the ordination of Bishops including that of His Grace Mor Gregorius Geevarghese Chathuruthil helped to restore true faith in the Church.

Mor Dionysius Joseph and Mor Gregorius Geevarghese reported to the Patriarch, the difficulties faced by the Church in the wake of the Protestant teachings (that the intercession of St. Mary is wrong and that the prayers for the departed are baseless). The Patriarch of Antioch intervened to protect the true faith, in the nineteenth century as it was done in the seventeenth century.

In 1880, the Patriarch Peter IV ordained Samuel Ramban Bishop by name Athanasius Shem'vun and sent him to Malankara. His disciple Sleebea was ordained Deacon and accompanied Mor Athanasius Shem'vun. They reached Kochi on 1 January 1881.

At that time, Kottayam Old Seminary and Cheriapally were in the possession of Protestant people. Therefore, a new church (Puthenpally) was established for the worship of the faithful. Mor Athanasius Shem'vun and Deacon Sleebea stayed at Puthenpally, Kottayam. In 1889, the Court Order came in favour of Mor Dionysius Joseph. Subsequently, Mor Athanasius Shem'vun and Deacon Sleebea moved to Old Seminary, Kottayam.

On 11 June 1889 Mor Athanasius Shem'vun departed for his heavenly abode while staying at Old Seminary, Kottayam. The mortal remains were interred at Puthenpally, Kottayam. Deacon Sleeba lost his teacher in a foreign land. He was not discouraged at the loss, but continued to work in the vineyard of the Lord.

Mor Gregorius Geevarghese (Chathuruthil) had a special affection for Deacon Sleeba. In 1895, Mor Gregorius visited the Holy Land for which all the arrangements were made by Deacon Sleeba and he accompanied the Bishop on his visit. Deacon Sleeba visited Mor Gregorius at Parumala on several occasions. On 2 November 1902, Mor Gregorius departed for the eternal rest. Deacon Sleeba again felt a big vacuum. However, he continued with the gospel work. Deacon Sleeba could speak Malayalam although with a foreign accent.

In 1906, Deacon Sleeba returned to Mosul, Iraq along with Deacon Mathew (Chettalathumkara) who later became Catholicos Augen. Both of them stayed at the monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul. Mor Coorilos Elias Kudso, the Reesh Dayro, ordained Deacon Sleeba Ramban. After two weeks Ramban Sleeba was ordained Priest. In March 1908, His Holiness Patriarch Abded Aloho II ordained *Kassesso* Sleeba Bishop by name Osthatheos at the church of Forty Martyrs

at Mosul and appointed him the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch in India.

Mor Dionysius Joseph was in his old age and Mor Ivanios Murimattathil retired from his administrative duties. In these circumstances in 1908 the meeting of the representatives of the Church met and elected *Kassesso Geevarghese (Vattasseril)* and *Ramban Paulose (Kochuparambil)* to be ordained Metropolitans. They went to Mosul and the Patriarch *Abded Aloho II* ordained them Metropolitans at Jerusalem. The three newly ordained Bishops including the delegate, *Mor Osthatheos*, came to Kerala along with *Ramban Augen*.

Mor Dionysius Joseph departed for heavenly abode on 11 July 1909. *Mor Osthatheos Sleeba*, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, carried out the administrative duties of the Church. *Mor Dionysius Geevarghese Vattasseril* was designated as the Malankara Metropolitan in a meeting held at the Old Seminary, Kottayam. It is in the year following his assuming the charge of Malankara Metropolitan that *Mor Dionysius Geevarghese* rebelled against the Holy See of Antioch. Later, *Vattasseril Bishop's* rivalry against *Mor Osthatheos* caused *Mor Osthatheos* to change His Grace's stay from Old Seminary where he had been staying for a long time.

In 1910, Bishop Vattasseril initiated a move to destroy the age-old apostolic succession of St. Peter in the Church. This issue caused a problem in Arthat Valiyapally. Those who believed in the Apostolic succession of St. Peter and the supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch wanted to establish a church at Arthat, Kunnamkulam. A few faithful executed a gift deed of land in favour of the Holy See of Antioch and handed over the property to His Grace Mor Osthatheos Sleeba, the delegate.

Mor Osthatheos Sleeba laid the foundation stone of the Arthat St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana church on 9 October 1920. His Grace celebrated Holy mass in a temporary shed. The Holy relic of Mor Kauma brought by Mor Osthatheos healed many ailing people. Several miracles are being reported through the intercession of Mor Osthatheos. During this period His Grace founded churches at Malel Cruz and Vadavukodu.

His Grace was suffering from hernia. The physical health of His Grace deteriorated and since 1927 Mor Julius Elias was helping him to discharge the duties of the delegate. On 13 March 1930 His Grace was given the unction for the sick. On 19 March 1930 at 9.00 p. m. His Grace departed for eternal rest. The mortal remains of His Grace were interred at the Arthat St. Mary's Syrian Simhasana church founded by him. His

Grace Mor Osthatheos Sleeba was declared saint by the Apostolic Bull No. E 71/2000 dated 4 April 2000 of the Patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. The feast of St. Osthatheos Sleeba is celebrated on 19 March in the Syrian Orthodox Church.

12. St. Ignatius Elias III Shakir

(1867-1932)

Mor Ignatius Elias III, the second son of Corepiscopus Abraham and Maryam, was born in Mardin, Turkey. He was called Nasri. He had four brothers and three sisters. After the death of his mother, Nasri was brought up under the care of his elder sister Helena. He worked as a shoemaker in his teens and served the government for about three months. At the direction of Patriarch Peter IV, Nasri joined the theological school of the forty martyrs. In 1887, he joined Deir al-Za'faran and was ordained Deacon by Patriarch Peter IV. He became a novitiate (*sharwoyo*) in 1888 and a monk in 1889 upon which he came to be known as Elias. Elias was ordained Priest (*qashisho*) in 1892 by Patriarch Peter IV. (<http://sor.eua.edu>).

In the waning years of the nineteenth century, numerous Armenian and Syriac Christians were massacred in Turkey. *Qashisho* Elias endeared himself to the Armenian Christians providing refuge for about 7000 in the monastery of Mor Quryaqos. He was later appointed the Chief of the

Monastery (*reesh dayroyo*) of the Mor Quryaqos as well as Deir al-Za'faran. In 1908 Qashisho Elias was consecrated Bishop of Amid (Diyarbakr) by Patriarch 'Abded Aloho II and was named Mor Iwanius. Mor Osthatheos Sleebea, the delegate of the Holy See of Antioch to India, was also ordained along with Mor Iwanius.

In 1912, he was transferred to Mosul. Patriarch 'Abded Aloho passed away on 9 December, 1915, and Mor Iwanius was elected Patriarch and assumed the throne in 1917. The decree (*firman*) was issued to Patriarch Elias III by the Ottoman Sultan Muhammad Rashid. The Sultan conferred the Ismania medal to the Patriarch. In 1922, when civil war broke out in Turkey and Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha assumed leadership of the newly formed democracy. During this period Moran Mor Elias III spent a few months in Jerusalem and laid the the foundation stone of the church of Our Lady at Jerusalem on 22 March 1926. Moran established a printing press there and began publication of journals in Syriac and Arabic.

Mor Elias III was the last Patriarch to reign at the Kurkmo Dayro (Deir Za'faran) in Mardin, Turkey, the seat of the Patriarchate for most of the second millenium. He was received by Ataturk, the father of the Turkish Nation, and attended the first Parliament session in Ankara. Following

the massacre of the Syriac Christians in South East Turkey in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, and during World War I, the Patriarch was forced to leave Mardin. In the aftermath of the *sayfo* massacres, Mor Elias III undertook pastoral tours to the Middle East, the first in 1919 and the second in 1925 to Aleppo and Jerusalem. Mor Elias III held a synod at Dayro d-Mor Matay, Mosul, Iraq in 1930.

Lord Irwin, then British Viceroy to India wrote to the Patriarch on 1 December 1930 requesting his intervention in person or through a delegate in resolving the schism that had erupted in the Malankara Church. His Holiness responded to the Viceroy's letter, on 15 December 1930 accepting his invitation with certain conditions. Given his cardiac problems, his doctors attempted to dissuade him from the trip. His 75-year old sister also discouraged the proposed trip. His Holiness said to her, "Death is inevitable whether here or in India; I would rather sacrifice my life for the sake of our children in Malankara."

Mor Elias III left Mosul on 6 February 1931 accompanied by Mor Clemis Yuhanon Abbachi (who was ordained Bishop in 1923 for the Monastery of Mor Mathai, Mosul, Iraq). Rabban Quryaqos (later Mor Osthathos Quryaqos), and Rabban Yeshu' Samuel (later Mor Athanasius Yeshue Samuel of North America), his secretary

Zkaryo Shakir (his brother Joseph's son) and translator Advocate Elias Ghaduri. They set sail to India on 28 February 1931 from Basra on the ship "Warsova" and disembarked at the Karachi port on 5 March 1931. They were received at Karachi by the Patriarchal Delegate Mor Yulius Elias Qoro, Mor Athanasius Paulos of Alwaye, and several clergymen and faithful. On 6 March 1931, the Patriarch and his entourage proceeded to Delhi by train reached Delhi on 8 March, and visited Lord Irwin. On 14 March, the Patriarch arrived in Madras and stayed as a guest of the British Governor Sir George Stanly. From there, he arrived at the Thrikkunathu Seminary, Alwaye on 21 March, and offered the Divine Liturgy there on 22 March.

H. H. Moran Mor Elias III convened conciliatory meetings at Alwaye, Karingachira and Panampady. The Patriarch led the Passion Week services at St. George church, Karingachira. A church delegates' meeting was held at Kuruppumpady on 5 July 1931. The Epiphany (*denho*) services in January 1932 were at the St Thomas church, Pakkil, Kottayam. Moran stayed at St. Ignatius church, Pallom for a week (Rajan, 2007b; Rajan, 2010).

On 11 February 1932, at the invitation of Father Kuriakose Elavinamannil, the Patriarch

arrived at the Manjinikkara Mor Stephanos church from Kallissery. The inability to bring about reconciliation in the Church had weighed down heavily on the Patriarch; moreover, the hardships of the long travel had taken its toll of His Holiness. On arriving at Manjinikkara, the Patriarch said, "This place offers us much comfort; we desire to remain here permanently." On 12 February, His Holiness requested the priests who came to visit him not to leave for a couple of days. In the evening, the Patriarch recited many prayers of the unction (*qandilo*) and contemplated on the departed. On 13 February, Mor Clemis Yuhanon Abbachi offered the Holy *Qurbono*; His Holiness gave the sermon during the liturgy.

After the noon prayers and lunch, as was his routine, the Patriarch spent time recording events in his journal; he asked for a dictionary to get clarification for the meaning of a word. Following that, he complained of pain in his head. Soon he fainted and was placed on a cot by the monks. He slipped into eternal rest at 2:30 p.m. Many eyewitnesses recount the deep gloom that cast its spell on the area that evening and the wails of the monks who accompanied the Patriarch.

Different opinions arose regarding the final resting place for the Patriarch — a situation that the Church in Malankara never had to confront

before. The decision was in favour of interring the mortal remains in a plot of land to the north of the Mor Stephanos church, the title deed of which was transferred to the Patriarchate. On 14 February, the funeral services of His Holiness were held there. Mor Dionysius Michael consoled the gathering.

Mor Ignatios Dayro church attached to the tomb of the late Patriarch was built by the Patriarchal delegate Mor Yulius Elias Qoro. Later in 1954 the tomb was rebuilt by Mor Yulios Elias Qoro. The memory of the holy Patriarch is revered throughout the Church and especially in Malankara where thousands of pilgrims reach the tomb by foot on the annual feast day, 13 February, from various parts of the Kerala State, India.

Mor Elias III is the only Patriarch of Antioch whose remains are interred in Malankara and his tomb stands as a towering symbol of the sacrifices made by the Syriac fathers to nurture the Church in Malankara. On 20 October 1987, Patriarch Moran Zakka I, through the encyclical E 265/87, permitted the Church in Malankara to remember his name in the fifth diptych. The feast of St. Elias III is celebrated on 13 February.

13. Mor Julios Elias Qoro the Delegate of the Holy See of Antioch

(A.D. 1881 – 1962)

Elias was born on 1 August 1881 in Mardin, Turkey. His father's name was Malke Qoro. He studied at the school of the church of Forty Martyrs.

He joined Kurkumo monastery (Dier Al-zafaran) in 1902 and received his priestly vestments on 16 June 1905 at the age of twenty four. In 1906 he was appointed as secretary to the Patriarch Ignatius Abdulla II. He became *Kassiso* at the age of twenty-seven. During 1908 - 1911 Ramban Elias visited Jerusalem, London and India. On 24 September 1909 Ramban Elias visited India along with H. H. the Patriarch. They returned on 14 October 1911.

In 1911 Moran Abdulla II appointed Elias Ramban as the abbot of the monastery and the director of the press. Sultan Muhamed Rasheed presented him a medal of honour.

He was consecrated bishop on 23 September 1923 in the church of the Forty Martyrs by Patriarch

Elias III with the title Yulios (Julius) and was sent to serve the Malankara Church. Mor Yulios Elias came to India on 22 October 1923. It was Yulios Elias Qoro who took Rev. Fr. Michael and Rev. Fr. Thomas Ottathaikkal, the bishop candidates to Jerusalem in 1926. In 1927 he was appointed as assistant to the then delegate of the Holy See of Antioch, Mor Osthathios Sleeba. After the demise of St. Osthatheos in 1930 Mor Yulios Elias was appointed as the delegate of Antioch to look after the churches and institutions which are directly under the administration and control of the Patriarch.

On 5 March 1931 when H. H. Moran Elias III arrived at Karachi Mor Yulios Elias and St. Athnasion Paulose were there to receive His Holiness.

Mor Yulios Elias took the initiative to build the tomb of H. H. Elias III at Manjanikkara and constructed the dayro church. The reconstruction work of the tomb of St. Elias III was started on 1 November 1954. It was under his leadership the church buildings were constructed for Simhasana churches at Kunnamkulam, Melelkurishu and Kot-tayam. He also established Simhasana churches at Thumpamon, Perumbally, Kallumgathara, Alleppey and Pampady.

Mor Yulios was a bishop during the times of H. H. Elias III, H. H. Aphrem I, and H. H. Yacub III. On 21 October 1932 Mor Yulios Elias left India to participate in the Holy Synod held at Homs, Syria on 6 January 1933. On 17 December 1933 Mor Yulios Elias returned to India along with V. Rev. Abdul Ahad Ramban. Mor Yulios ordained Very Rev. Ramban (Later H. H. Yacub III) priest in 1934. Abdul Ahad Ramban stayed at Manjanikkara from 1933 to 1946.

On 11 September 1952 Mor Yulios Elias accompanied Rev. Fr. P. J. Paulose who was to be ordained as Mor Philexinose Paulose. They returned on 15 January 1953.

Mor Yulios has contributed greatly to strengthen the relationship between the Holy Apostolic See of Antioch and the Malankara Church. He was arrested following a dissension in Kunnamkulam Simhasana church soon after the peace agreement in 1958. Today Kunnamkulam Simhasana church is under the administration of the Apostolic See of Antioch mainly due to the intense efforts made by Mor Yulios Elias of blessed memory.

Mor Yulios gave great importance to the education of priests. Those who were trained during his tenure in Manjinikkara received incomparable discipline. After serving as a bishop

for thirty-nine years he departed for the heavenly abode on 19 February 1962. He was entombed in the tomb already prepared by him. His feast is celebrated on 19 February.

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